

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

**A Study on How Two Third-Level
Institutions in the West of Ireland
Improve Their Marketing Strategies in
Mainland China**

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Submission Date: 1st, September 2010

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
Masters of Business in Strategy and Innovation Management at
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology.

Declaration: "I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work."



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Acknowledgements

I feel very fortunate in having Dr. Miriam McSweeney as my supervisor. She has spent much of her time reviewing my work during the year. The valuable guidance and advice that she provided throughout the whole period of my Masters study, along with her patience and tolerance, have made this journey not only possible but also enjoyable and filled with academic challenges.

Moreover I would like to express my special appreciation to Mr. Dennis Murphy for his friendly help, guidance and support. My special thanks are extended to the International Officers of GMIT and NIU Galway for their time they spared for me and providing me with primary data, which was necessary to complete this research work. My special thanks also go to those lecturers who have guided me over my one-year Masters studying in Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to my family, without them I wouldn't have got this opportunity to do this Masters.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all my friends who have directly or indirectly helped with this study, they are the source of confidence for me to overcome difficulties in my study and life.

Finally, I am very grateful to Dr. Xianyang Lai, for his support and help throughout the study. Without his help, the paper would not have been finished.

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the growing phenomenon of mainland Chinese students studying in Ireland and various marketing strategies used by Irish Third-Level institutions to determine the elements that can be considered by Third-Level institution in future while designing their international marketing strategies with mainland China. The purpose of this research project is to explain how two Third-Level institutions in the west of Ireland improve their marketing strategies in mainland China.

The study draws insight from a quantitative research approach and the case studies of GMIT and NUI Galway. Data were collected through questionnaire survey with mainland Chinese students studying in these two Third-Level institutions, and fifty-eight qualified questionnaires were fully analysed.

This study illustrates the investigation and the data analysis. The study also tests the data against the relevant theory and discusses the findings. The study found that Irish Third-Level institutions should adopt different marketing strategies to recruit mainland Chinese students, such as university cooperation, recruitment agents, advertising and promotion, Internet using, and etc.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The research question of this research is how two Third-Level institutions in the west of Ireland improve their marketing strategies in mainland China. This chapter addresses the background of the research, the major ideas which the whole research revolves around and the objectives of the research. A brief overview of all the chapters is then presented.

1.2 Background to the Research

Mainland China has always been proud of its education system and the high literacy of its people. Given the huge population, it is not surprising that the Chinese education system is very large and diverse. China has always sent students overseas, but until the opening up the economy in the early 1980s, it was only the children of Government officials and other well-connected students and researchers who could afford to travel abroad for further education.

With an increasingly open society and rapidly increasing wealth, the numbers of travelling overseas has increased dramatically in the past few years. Families are fully prepared to spend many times of their annual income to get a quality overseas education for their children. While the Government is concerned about the effects of a “brain drain”, the response has been pragmatic, because of the lack of space in local universities, and the recognition that those who return from an overseas education are an asset to modern China. While at one time very few students would wish to return to China, the opportunities now available in China are attracting many overseas students to return. Therefore, more and more mainland Chinese students are choosing to undertake their undergraduate or graduate degrees overseas.

1.3 Focus of the Research

The most attractive countries in the overseas education sector for mainland China are English-speaking countries, such as the United State, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. However, European countries such as France, Germany, Belgium and Holland are becoming more active, and in some cases are offering free courses for university degrees. The disadvantage for the non-English speaking countries is that few people in mainland China study their languages and, unless studies are offered through English, the numbers of applying will continue to be low. This gives Irish Third-level institutions a clearly competitive advantage.

Currently there are just over 3,500 mainland Chinese students attending Irish Higher Educational Institutes, worth in excess of €65 million to the Irish economy on fees and money spent on food / accommodation etc. Since 2000, mainland Chinese students coming to Ireland has grown at a rate of 15% per annum, although in the last few years have seen a slight decline as a result of a number of factors including enhanced educational opportunities at home and declining job prospects in China for graduates with foreign degrees.

In contrast to other nationalities, the Chinese are less interested in arts and humanities, with roughly 5% studying in that field, the more popular programmes are business (55%), ICT (15%), Hospitality and Tourism (9%). An increased interest in postgraduate studies in Ireland amongst mainland Chinese students has emerged. The Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment's Asia Strategy identified linkages between Irish and Chinese Third-level institutions and the recruitment of Chinese students as one of the primary methods of generating economic links and future generations of business partners for Irish companies.

1.4 The Research Objectives

1.4.1 Primary Objective

More than 350,000 mainland Chinese students are believed to be studying for degrees at overseas universities in 2007 and they will continue to increase their domination of the international student market for decades. Since Ireland contained in the European Policy Statement submitted to the European Commission in November 2000, international students have significantly increased. Internationalization is now a major feature of Irish Third-Level institutions. Recently these institutions have attracted more and more mainland Chinese students to study in Ireland, and what can they do to expand this market? This study proposes to evaluate what the two Third-Level institutions (GMIT and NUI Galway) in the west of Ireland have done in the mainland Chinese market and how they could improve in order to recruit more mainland Chinese students.

In order to answer the research question, other subsidiary questions arise. These are outlined in the Secondary objectives.

1.4.2 Secondary Objectives

1. Examine the size of the mainland Chinese students market. Investigate what the market consist of, what the intentions for mainland Chinese students studying abroad and why mainland Chinese students choosing to study overseas.

2. How the mainland Chinese market is established and evaluates the marketing approach / methods currently employed by two Third-Level institutions. The following aspects will be considered: What is the number of mainland Chinese Students since 2005, and how it has changed? Why mainland Chinese students choose Ireland to study and what are the popular programmes? How much the students should afford in order to study? What are the advantages of studying in Ireland?

3. Benchmarking Irish efforts / success versus major competitors such as the UK. Assess data available on international education which is growing very rapidly. Compare with the country and research on why it is successful in recruiting mainland Chinese students and what Irish Third-Level institutions can learn from it.

1.5 Summary of the Findings

Based on the Questionnaire-based data and the literature review, the following key research findings were summarised.

1. There are dominant points for mainland Chinese students studying in Ireland:

- Ireland is an English speaking country.
- Irish education is of the highest international quality.
- Ireland has one of the best education systems in the world.
- Ireland has a rich cultural heritage.
- The studying cost in Ireland is quite low compared with UK.
- Students can work legally in Ireland.
- Ireland has a reputation for being a safe and welcoming country to live in.
- Irish people are among the most enriching reasons to study in Ireland.

2. The numbers of mainland Chinese students enrolling both in GMIT and NUI Galway have been increasing year by year since 2005.

3. There is difference in reasons why mainland Chinese students came to study in Ireland between GMIT and NUI Galway.

In GMIT, 37.5% of students considered university cooperation, followed by 22.5% of students considering cheap tuition fees and 20% of students considering English-speaking country. In NUI Galway, 44.4% questionnaire-answered students considered the institution with good reputations and 33.3% of them came to Ireland because Ireland is an English-speaking country.

4. There is clear difference in the factors which attract mainland Chinese students between GMIT and NUI Galway.

In NUI Galway, most students from mainland China were studying for the academic research such as Ph.D. because of its reputations and scholarship; in contrast, in GMIT, most mainland Chinese students, who were the exchange students from Chinese cooperation universities, are studying for Business, Hotel management and etc. This supported that the cooperation between GMIT and Chinese institutions had important effect on the students' studying in GMIT.

5. There is significant difference in the ages of mainland Chinese students between GMIT and NUI Galway.

According to the questionnaire analysis, the studying students' age group was significantly different between the two institutions. Most mainland Chinese students in GMIT were at the age group of 20-21, while nearly half of the students in NUI Galway were in the age group of 25-28. This indicated that students in GMIT were clearly younger than students in NUI Galway. Meanwhile, there were very few students below 19 or over the age of 29 in both institutions.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One: This chapter gives the general information about the research. That is the background of the research. Further clear research objectives are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Two: This chapter is Literature Review. It discusses the work already done by different people. This data is the motivating factor behind the whole research work. This chapter discusses the 2010 survey report on mainland Chinese students, International education marketing, UK & China strategic cooperation and so on.

Chapter Three: This chapter discusses the methodology used for the research. The chapter discusses about the research tools used for analysis and the methods used for collecting the data. The methodology use is quantitative approach. Case study approach is taken to answer the research question.

Chapter Four: In this chapter, the findings from the primary and the secondary sources are analysed based on the answers of the questionnaire. The analysis provides a well-judged path to the research study which leads to conclusion.

Chapter Five: This chapter discusses about the analysis of the findings, gives conclusions. The conclusions are related to literature review are observed. Further limitations of the research and opportunities for further research are briefed out.

1.7 Summary and Conclusions

In the chapter, the background of the research was discussed followed by the research objectives. Summary of the findings came next; all of this work had been followed by a brief outline of all the chapters covered during research work.

Chapter Two:
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review chapter aims to establish a context for the current study and its contribution to the current research literature. This will be achieved by placing in some perspective of the key research findings presented by previous researchers relating to the research questions, and where possible, relevant perspectives of the Third-Level institutions in the west of Ireland to improve their marketing strategies in mainland China.

Although general studies have been abound on international education marketing, specific information on the fields of Sino-Ireland education is scarce. It is worth mentioning that it is impossible to include all the research findings on international education marketing in this chapter or in the current study. In this study, the literature review is based on research conducted in some English-speaking countries, especially the UK. In this chapter, key findings related to the research questions in the existing literature will be discussed.

Section 2.2 focuses on the 2010 survey report on mainland Chinese students' intentions to study abroad, which shows the trends of mainland Chinese students' willing to study overseas in 2010.

Section 2.3 concentrates on the internationalisation of China's higher education and why mainland Chinese students study overseas. It presents and discusses key research findings on the reasons for mainland Chinese students seeking to study abroad.

Section 2.4 looks at Irish education system and why to study in Ireland. This section presents some key research findings from academic researchers and information available in the mass media on the reasons for studying in Ireland.

Section 2.5 focuses on international education systems and in particular the strategic cooperation between UK and China. This section discusses “critical success factors” for international education, which helps to analyse the marketing strategies for Irish Third-level institutions.

Finally, Section 2.6 is the summary and conclusions of the chapter.

2.2 The 2010 Survey Report on Mainland Chinese Students' Intentions to Study Abroad

According to a recent report by a China's well-known educational group, EIC Group, Beijing International Education Institute (BIEI) released China's first 2010 survey report on mainland Chinese students' intentions to study abroad. The survey covered nearly 6,000 university and high school students and their parents in 13 major cities - Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Nanjing, Wuhan, Changsha, Xiamen, Jinan, Qingdao, Dalian, Shenyang and Chongqing.

This survey aimed at researching the mainland Chinese students' target countries for their overseas studies, their current educational background, their goals for overseas studies, comprehensive considerations on overseas studies, and so on. The results of the report presented the intentions of mainland Chinese students' willing to study abroad for the year 2010.

2.2.1 Summary of the Report

During October 10, 2009 to November 2, 2009, EIC Group handed out total 6500 questionnaires to the students and parents who were interested in studying overseas, and eventually recovered 5,782 valid questionnaires including more than 500 copies from Beijing, 1,300 copies from Guangzhou, 700 copies from Shenzhen, 500 copies from Jinan, and 400 copies from Shanghai. Most students who participated in the survey had a very clear tendency for overseas studying.

From this survey we can easily find out that studying abroad in Chinese market in 2010 will usher in two key words: “Multiple” and “Emphasis”. Most of those targeted students presented diverse options and focused destinations, as U.S. President Barack Obama’s visit to China, which made the original study in the United States once again became hot point. Undergraduates and high school students remained the main force for overseas studying. In the area of accessing studying information, over 80% of students chose to use network, comparing with most parents preferred to newspapers and introductions from relatives and friends.

Mr. Li Zhu, who is a senior expert and the President of EIC Group, analyzed that as the picking up of the global economy, the gradual expansion of education spending worldwide, particularly after being known as the “Year of China in 2009”, China’s economic strength can be further recognized in the world and most countries including the United States have indicated friendly to China. Under this unprecedented favorable international environment, another peak for studying abroad would show up in 2010 and this would be another spring for the industry.

students would like to choose the United States for studying in 2010. Meanwhile, the statistics showed that unlike previous years, students from different cities chose the same country for overseas study. Take Australia for example; which had been the first choice for students in South China in previous years, but this report suggested that students chose the United States in 2010 as their intentions. The United States had been the first time accounted for 31%, and Australia was 23% which fell 6 percentage points to the same period.

As a traditional popular country, the UK ranked the second behind the United States in the survey. However, there were still some gaps among cities such as Shanghai, Shenyang, and Dalian, in which students chose Japan as their intentions rather than the United States. At the same time, students from Qingdao, Jinan, Chongqing, and Changsha took Germany as their target country. With the relaxation of working permit, Canada was attracting more and more mainland Chinese students, which yearning nearly 11% planning to study in Canada.

Because of the lower tuition fees and the characteristics of quality education, countries like Singapore, South Korea, Japan, and China's Hong Kong were also more popular in the middle income families. The numbers of students applying to Singapore and Japan in 2009 had the highest growth, with 30% and 25%, respectively. The survey showed that the growth in 2010 will not be lower than this amount. In Europe, countries like Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland and Scandinavian are concerned by more and more Chinese students. There was an upward trend in the number of applications for those countries, for instance, Germany grew by 25%.

2.2.3 The Main Body of Mainland Chinese Students

Among the mainland Chinese students who intended to study abroad, those with a bachelor's degree accounted for 60% while senior high school students and those with a master's degree accounted for 22.6% and 10%, respectively. (See Figure 2.2) On the other hand, studying abroad will become a strong trend in China in 2010. In the survey, 37.56% of these mainland Chinese students planed to go abroad in 1 year, 24.67% in 2 years and 12.29% in 6 months. (See Figure 2.3)

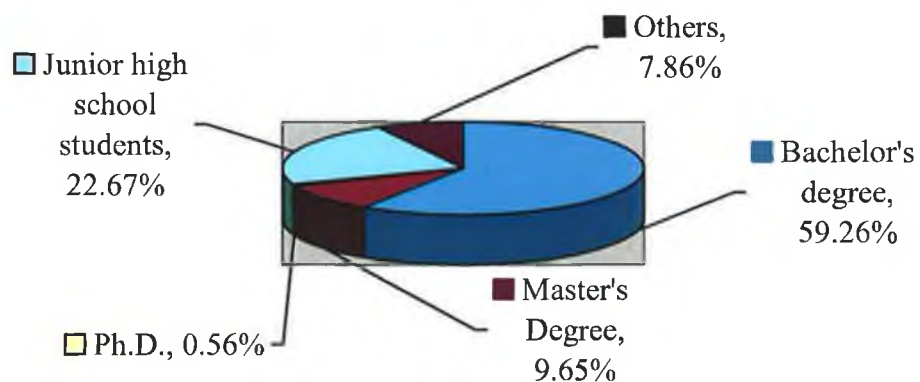


Figure 2.2: The main body of mainland Chinese students seeking for overseas studies

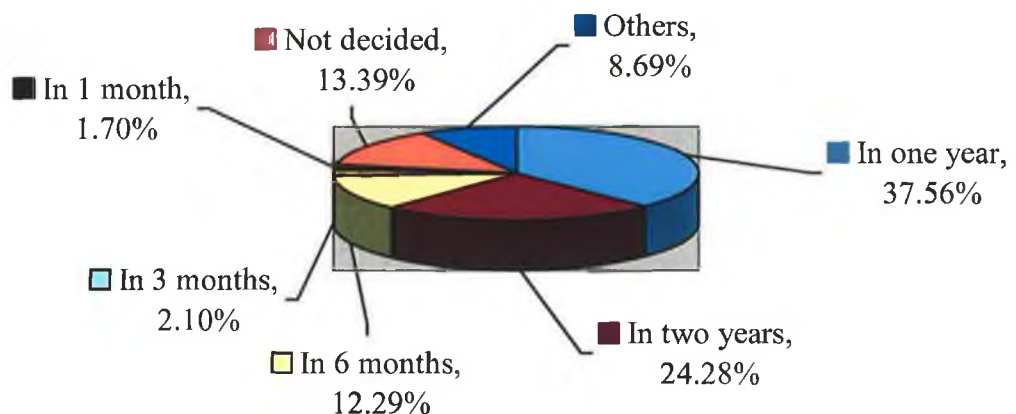


Figure 2.3: Time Schemes for mainland Chinese students plan to go abroad

According to analysis by President Li Zhu, more than 50% of the above-mentioned mainland Chinese students plan to obtain a master's degree at a foreign university. 25.09% of the students were senior high school students who intended to study at foreign universities. In addition, statistics showed that nearly 12.96% of the above-mentioned mainland Chinese students are junior high school students. They intended to enter senior high schools in foreign countries, which will become the third largest source of Chinese overseas students. (See Figure 2.4)

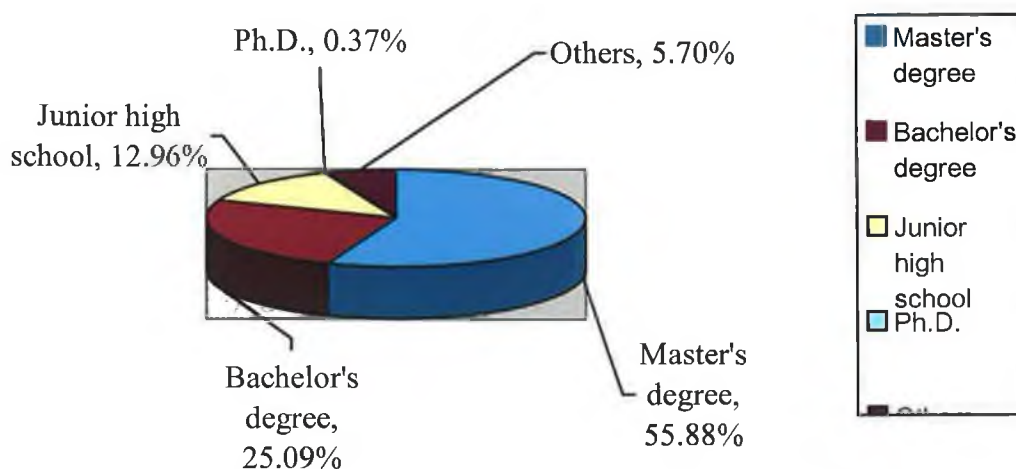


Figure 2.4: The level of study for mainland Chinese students studying overseas

2.2.4 The Factors for Consideration

As for the question “What factors will be considered first when you selecting countries for overseas studying”, 26.8% of the students selected “education quality”, followed by “culture”, and 13.7% concerned about “studying costs”. At the same time, “language”, “immigration affairs” and “safety factors” were the factors considered more by parents. (See Figure 2.5)

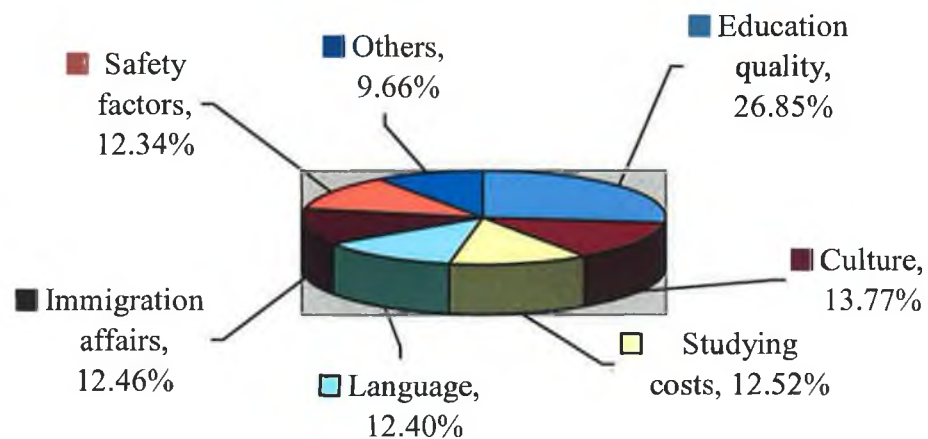


Figure 2.5: Factors for mainland Chinese students selecting countries for overseas studies

In the question “Which factors will be taken into account when you choosing colleges”, “rankings of programmes” and “employment prospects” were the two priority factors prospective students were concerned, accounted for 35.8% and 30.7%, respectively. Meanwhile, “school recognition” was also considered by a lot of students in 13%, and 12% took “studying costs” into firstly consideration. (See Figure 2.6) This showed that more and more mainland Chinese students became rational when making choice. They can fully understand the inherent relationship between study and employment, taking their own career planning into account.

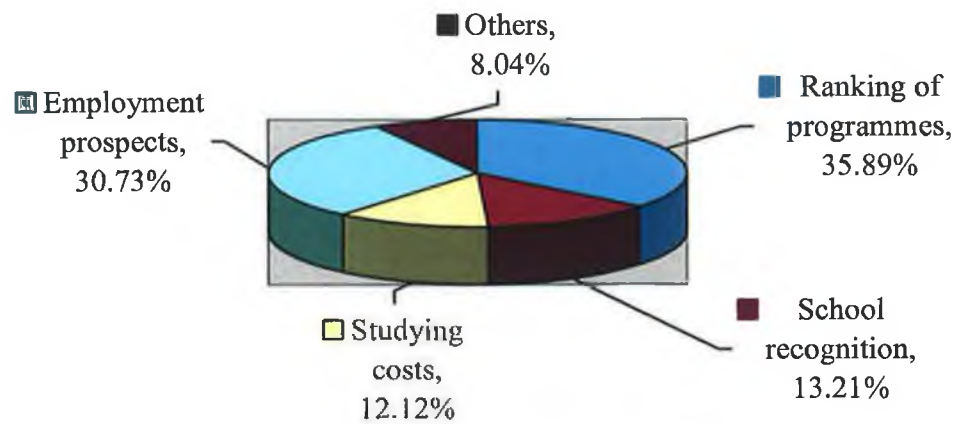


Figure 2.6: Factors for mainland Chinese students considering studying abroad



2.2.5 The Programmes

Business sciences remain popular among mainland Chinese students. From the survey, we can find out that as for the “favorite programmes”, nearly 30% of the mainland Chinese students chose business sciences including finance and accounting, marketing and business administration. Business sciences were even more popular among the students bound for Britain, the United States and Australia. It is said that about 70% of Britain-bound mainland Chinese students plan to study business sciences.

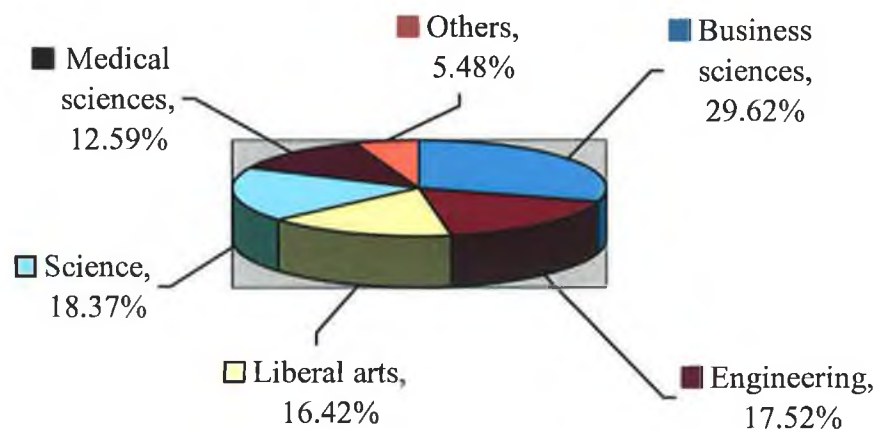


Figure 2.7: The programmes mainland Chinese students choosing for studying overseas

The number of prospective students who chose engineering, liberal arts and science was rather equal, accounting for 17.52%, 16.42% and 18.37% respectively, of which about 20% or more would like to choose the United States, Korea, or Singapore for science and engineering courses. About 4.2% of students would study arts, slightly higher than 2009. (See Figure 2.7)

2.2.6 The Channels for Obtaining Information

The statistics showed that networks and newspapers were becoming the main channels for mainland Chinese students and parents obtaining information for overseas studying. Nearly 29% of the respondents chose “newspapers” for accessing information and 35% used “web site or search engine” for study and relevant information. Most of the students preferred to use the network to access studying information and from the survey, 80% of the students chose “Web site” and “search engine”. Meanwhile, there were a number of students, about 9%, getting information from the campus posters, leaflets, lectures and other campus sources.

However, the parents (between 40 and 55 year-old), who normally had the right to decide whether their children would study abroad, mainly obtained study information through newspapers. (See Figure 2.8) In addition, the introduction from relatives and friends or from study abroad agencies was another way for students and parents selecting the information, which accounted for 13% and 11% respectively.

Comparing with the introduction from the agencies, people were more willing to trust teachers, classmates, family members or friends. President Li Zhu pointed out that: “High-quality brand will spread by word of mouth, and nearly 30% of our customers were for a referral here.”

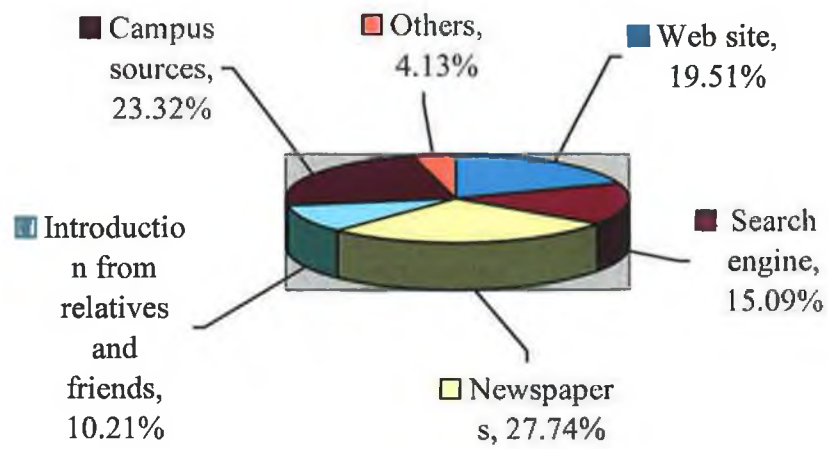


Figure 2.8: Parents preferred to obtain study information through newspapers

2.3 Chinese Students Studying Overseas

2.3.1 Internationalisation of China's Higher Education

An important element of the modern China's educational system is the internationalisation of higher education. International cooperation and exchange, and especially student mobility, have been encouraged recently. It is estimated that between 1978 and 2004 over 800,000 mainland Chinese students went abroad to study. Since 1998, the annual number of new students studying abroad has risen from 11,000 to 120,000 in 2004 (Zhou Ji, 2005). For example, in 2004 to 2005, about 52,000 mainland Chinese students were studying in the UK for a higher education award, the majority of which were postgraduates.

Over the last two decades, China has signed mutual recognition agreements with over 20 countries, including Ireland and the UK, and has over 100 other types of bilateral agreement. It has also initiated a great amount of joint ventures in the delivery of higher education programmes which are defined by the <2003 Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools>, with a recent addendum in the form of the *Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Some Issues concerning Current Sino-foreign Cooperative Education*.

The regulations provide the framework requirements for in-country Sino-foreign cooperation. They specify that partnerships must not have profit as their objective, that not less than half of the members of the governing body of the institution must be Chinese citizens, and that a resident Chinese citizen must hold the post of president. In addition, there are prescriptions about the level of tuition fees.

2.3.2 Reasons Why Mainland Chinese Students Study Overseas

Researchers mostly agree that there are push and pull factors for Chinese families to send their children overseas. According to Shen (2005), Ong (2006), Li, M. (2007), Zweig & Rosen (2003), the prestige of foreign degrees and advancement in English and foreign languages are the key factors to secure a well-paid job.

Altbach (1998, p.240) introduced the Push-Pull factor model first for international student mobility. He explained that in earlier days students were pushed by unfavourable conditions in their native countries and pulled, in parallel, by generous scholarships, excellent research facilities and other opportunities in host locations like the United States, Canada, Australia and Europe. More recently there has been a tremendous increase of self-financed students studying overseas following the economic development of the mainland and the increased wealth of its citizens. The low tuition fees in some European countries, such as Ireland, Germany and France, remain cost efficient and attract many mainland Chinese students (Shen 2005, p. 430).

Li and Bray (2007) indicated that “This standard push-pull model is valuable as an explanatory mechanism, but it has limitations. Both push and pull factors are external forces which impact on actors’ behaviours and choices” (p. 794). They also believed that personal characteristics of the actors who, are students in this case, play a crucial role in deciding the reasons and motivations for going to study overseas and that these characteristics include social-economic status, academic ability, gender, age motivation, and aspiration (p.794).

Contrary to Li and Bray, Mazzarol and Soutar (2001) focused mainly on external mobility factors of students from mainland China, India and Indonesia. For them, there were four motivating factors; firstly, an overseas course of study is viewed as better than a local one; secondly, students ability to gain entry to particular programmes; thirdly, a desire to improve understanding of foreign societies, and at last, an intention to migrate after graduation (p.51). They showed that the top factors for mainland students in Australia included institutional reputation of quality, willingness to recognize previous qualifications, and provision of degrees that were recognized by employers.

Different from the above researchers, Zheng (2003) revealed the factors that shaped students' intentions to study overseas when analysing the high-achievement of undergraduate students in Tsinghua University and Beijing University. The factors could be divided into six groups: economic factors, educational factors, personal factors, social factors, cultural factors and political factors. Among these, economic, educational and personal factors were the most important determinants. This matches with the theory of Li and Bray (2007), but with some variations. The latter takes these factors as personal factors, while the former takes them as external forces.

Similar to Zheng, Pang and Appleton (2004) pointed that most students and scholars studied in the United States as an immigration path to stay in that country:

Factors influencing their decisions to immigrate to the United States included lack of professional opportunities, recurrent intrusion of the state into individuals' lives, the residual mistrust of intellectuals and related political instability (of home country). Four factors emerged in the decisions of participants to come to the United States. They were: desire for more education, educational preparation, financial support and escape from unpleasant situations in China.

(Pang & Appleton 2004, p.506)

2.4 Studying in Ireland

2.4.1 Irish Education System

Ireland has a long and honourable tradition in education. Now Ireland has one of the highest educational participation rates in the world – 81% of Irish students complete second-level and approx 60% go on to higher education. As a result of the dynamic, educated population, international companies look to Ireland again and again when hiring graduates for top class positions.

Education is considered a fundamental right under the constitution. It is compulsory in Ireland to attend full time education from six to fifteen years of age, and is free in the majority of schools and at undergraduate third-level. The Department of Education and Science is responsible for education.

The Irish Education System is traditionally divided into three basis levels: Primary (8 years), Secondary (5 or 6 years) and Higher Education. The Higher Education offers a wide range of opportunities from post-secondary courses, to vocational and technical training, to full degree and the highest post-graduate levels. In recent years pre-school education and lifelong learning has expanded as the concept of the Irish education system.

2.4.2 Why to Study in Ireland

Ireland is a country steeped in tradition and history. Ireland's long and honourable tradition in educational excellence is recognised by all over the world. The long-standing tradition of providing exceptional education began with 6th century. Modern governments have continued to regard education as a key priority and investment in this area has been sustained for a long time. This has made Ireland become one of the highest education participation rates in the world today.

There are several dominant points for studying in Ireland:

- **Ireland is an English speaking country** with close cultural, economic and educational links with the English-speaking world, especially with the UK and the United States. Meanwhile, some of the great writers in English literature have come from Ireland.
- **Irish education is of the highest international quality.** This high quality of the Irish education is a major contributing factor to the rapid rate of economic growth that Ireland has experienced over the last few decades.
- **Ireland has one of the best education systems in the world**, which ranks 8th according to the *independent IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2009*. The education system has close links to industry and is characterised by creativity, flexibility, agility, pragmatism and informality.
- **Irish higher education institutions are widely recognised for excellence in many disciplines.** Ireland is recognised as an international location for high quality scientific research.

- **Ireland has a rich cultural heritage** with its own distinctive language (Gaelic) music, culture and sports.
- **The studying cost in Ireland is quite low.** The cost of the tuition fees and the living cost compared with other European countries have great advantages, which just equals to 60% of the total cost in UK.
- **Students can work legally in Ireland.** Irish Government allows students to work 20 hours per week while in school, and can work as full-time during holidays. Students can easily find their contact with the society, and support their studies with high wage income.
- **Ireland is one of the most exciting places in the world for a student.** 40% of the population in Ireland is under the age of 25.
- **Ireland has a reputation for being a safe and welcoming country to live in,** ranking 12th in the 2009 Global Peace Index.
- **Irish people are among the most enriching reasons to study in Ireland.** Ireland was voted by Lonely Planet as the most friendly country in the world in 2008 and 2010. Irish people are renowned for their friendliness and hospitality which greatly contributes to the ease with which overseas students adapt to student life in Ireland.

2.5 International Education Marketing

2.5.1 Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy or the marketing mix is the combination of stages or elements necessary to the planning and execution of the total marketing operation (Yadin & Jefkin, 2000). The marketing mix is one of the most widely accepted concepts in the discipline of marketing. Traditionally, it is known as the 4P's: product, price, place and promotion.

The marketing mix is a practical marketing tool that an organization uses to produce the response it wants from its target market. It consists of everything that the institution can do to boost the demand for the services that it offers. Tangible products have usually used 4P's, and the services sector uses a 7P approach in order to complete the needs of the service provider's. Blythe (2005) indicated that 7P's are product, price, place, promotion, people, physical facilities and process.

Product

Product is what a venue or destination offers for sale in order to satisfy customer needs. This includes all of the tangible elements as well as the intangibles. (Davidson & Rogers, 2006)

Product is what is being sold and it is one of the most important marketing tools which should be concentrated by institutions in their marketing. In the case of an institution, students enrolling for courses will be seen as the customers and the

degrees are the products. For the students, the course content should be undated regularly and the content should meet the requirements of the market, and the students should satisfy which is the key factor.

Price

It is the amount charged for services provided, which is a more important consideration for venues than for CVB's. (Davidson & Rogers, 2006)

Price is what is being charged for the degree that is required to register at the institution and it is a crucial part in marketing of the institutions. The pricing element affects the revenues that an institution gets for its registrations', and also the student perceptions of the finesses. Most institutions charging higher tuition fees for foreign students, tuition fees can have an impact on student's decision to register for courses.

Place

It is generally taken to describe those distribution channels the venture or the destination uses to make its product available and accessible to prospective customers. (Davidson & Rogers, 2006)

Place is where the educational institution is giving coaching to the students. It is one of the factors student attracts towards the institution in the decision making step. Students look at the place of the institution like geographical location, infrastructure and surroundings of the institution before enrolling for the course.

Promotion

Personal selling is typically categorized as one of the firm's promotional strategy. Promotion is only one of the seven main sets of strategies, variables, or building blocks of marketing. (Kalb, 1990)

Promotion includes all the tools that institutions can use to provide the market with data on its offerings: advertising, publicity, public relations and promotional efforts. Promotion plays a significant role in the entire marketing process. Only using prospectus or the institution's website is not to be successful. Institutions could employ a number of promotional tools such as open days, international educational education exhibitions, direct mail and advertising to inform and convince prospective students to select the institution.

People

People have a significant role to play in the service marketing. People are internal marketing aspects who act as contact personnel with the customers. (Srinivasan, 2004)

The people element of the 7P's of marketing mix in the situation of institutions includes all the staff of the institution, students and all the people who are related to the institution directly or indirectly. The staff could be academic, administrative and support staff. The image and status of academic staff can play a key role in recruitment of students. Students attract by the number of academic staff who is PhD holders, Professorial title, and academics' public profiles.

Physical evidence

Physical evidence is quite important for those who maintain premises from which a service is sold or delivered. Some factors included are the atmosphere, ambience, image and design of premises. (Pettitt, 2006)

Physical evidence is the material part of a service offering and is the tangible component. There are a variety of tangible aspects in the institution's target market, which includes the services provided by the institution to the students, ranging from the brochures, teaching materials, the buildings and lecture facilities at the institution.

Process

Process is the part of the service which is delivered to the customer. Various issues are considered in process management from process planning and control, operation planning, facility design, quality control to forecasting and long term planning. (Srinivasan, 2004)

Process is another element of the extended marketing mix. The process is all the administrative and bureaucratic functions of the institution: from the handling of enquiries to enrolment, from course assessment to exams, from result distribution to graduation. During the tenure that the students is enrolled, processes need to be set in action to make sure that the student enrolls for the correct course, has marks / grades correctly calculated and entered against the student's details and is awarded the correct degree.

2.5.2 Strategies for International Education Marketing

A rapid expansion of international education emerged during the last two decades. Education institutions trying to achieve success in international markets must undertake a range of activities designed to attract prospective students from around the world. The decision to study overseas for most students and their families is one of the most significant and expensive initiatives they will have ever carried out.

The marketing of an education institution within international markets requires both sensitivity and sophistication. Relatively little has been written on the marketing of education within international markets (Altbach et al., 1985; Altbach and Wang, 1989; Smart and Ang, 1992b). That is why it is hard to apply any ready-made strategies or solutions to the problems facing institutions' in their marketing activities. Several "critical success factors" for education institutions operating in international markets are examined in the following subsections:

Quality of reputation and level of market recognition / profile

These two factors are important to the development of competitive advantage which has been highlighted in several studies (Aaker, 1989; 1991; Hall, 1992; 1993). They are not identical to each other while they are closely related. Aaker (1989) found that managers of service enterprises ranked a "reputation for quality" and "name recognition / high profile" as significant sources of competitive advantage.

Possession of international strategic alliances

The importance of possessing international strategic alliances is a source of competitive advantage. Porter and Fuller (1986) described the importance of coalitions to international marketing. The primary benefits of coalitions being the ability to gain: "economies of scale"; "access" (to distribution channels, capital, local

knowledge etc.); “reduction of risk”; and the ability to shape competition. Coalition activity can be a source of competitive advantage (Dunning and Pearce, 1985; Ohmae, 1985). Pekar and Allio (1994) mentioned that within the international business community the trend has been toward the formation of strategic alliances, although care needs to be taken to ensure that the nature of the alliance is clearly understood with performance benchmarks established.

Advertising and promotion

Advertising has not been widely used within education marketing. A survey of international students in Australia found that only 3 to 8% of respondents (depending upon type of institution attended, e.g. university, secondary, ELICOS) claimed mass media advertising to be their main source of information prior to selecting their institution (Harris and Rhall, 1993, p. 46). The most significant weakness is the perception that many prospective international students believed that those advertisements of the institutions cannot be of high quality (AGB, 1992). Research emphasized that the advertising of services requires a different approach to more conventional products (Bateson, 1979; Zeithaml et al., 1985; Legg and Baker, 1991). It has been recommended that education institutions making use of advertising need to emphasize their positive qualities via use of testimonials (Danko, 1986).

Use of recruitment agents

It has been one of the more controversial issues to use recruitment agents to promote international education. Some commentators have criticized agents for giving false information and engaging in unethical practices (Davis, 1989). Others have indicated support for agents as a valuable form of promotion (Edwards and Browne, 1991; Smart and Ang, 1992b). For example, in Australia international students support the view that agents are an important source of information. One study showed that 29% of students surveyed had consulted an agent, and 20% had relied heavily upon their advice (Harris and Rhall, 1993, p. 62). Another study found that nearly half the students surveyed had used agents (DCT, 1993, p. 49).

Use of government promotion agencies

A considerable investment and promotion centres have being made by countries such as Australia, the UK, the United States and Ireland in establishing and maintaining education information. Most of those are professionally run, well resourced and distribute information to a substantial number of prospective students each year (DEET, 1993). But the government information centres are not effective enough to recruit students. Harris and Rhall (1993) indicated that 55% of international students in Australia had neither used nor heard of the Australian Education Centres (AECs) (located in ten Asia-Pacific capitals). Another study found AECs recruited only 7% of students sampled compared to 33% from agents (Smart and Ang, 1993, p. 28).

2.5.3 UK & China Strategic Cooperation

UK institutions have been particularly active in establishing joint venture initiatives with Chinese partner institutions for the delivery of UK higher education awards in the People's Republic of China. This has been facilitated by extensive high-level cooperation on education between the Chinese and UK governments. Since 2005, annual Ministerial-level Education Summits have been held, with joint statements strengthening cooperation in all fields of education. The Scottish Executive has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chinese Ministry of Education, which was signed in 2005. (QAA, 2006)

In a recent statement, the UK Higher Education Minister noted that "Education is at the heart of the UK's developing relationship with China. We have made great progress in strengthening our educational links, and links between UK and Chinese universities are thriving".

The Sino-UK Higher Education Collaboration Programme has started since 1996 and covers strategic collaboration on higher education reform. This contributes to the development of higher education both in China and the UK by learning from one another's experience and strengthening links. The Chinese Ministry of Education, the British Council in China and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) are the key sponsoring organizations.

In the programme, collaborative activities and projects have focused on the collaborative assessment of research and postgraduate education, mutual linking of academic networks (JANET and CERNET), President and Vice-Chancellor Forums, e-learning and mutual recognition of degrees and university leadership development.

2.5.4 UK & China Education Links

According to the 2005 QAA scoping survey, which was about the delivery of UK awards in China, 82 UK higher education institutions indicated that they had or were intending to establish a link with a Chinese institution to deliver a UK higher education award. Institutions from all of the four countries of the UK have established links: 65 institutions from England, 2 from Northern Ireland, 10 from Scotland and 5 from Wales.

UK higher education institutions stated that there were 352 individual links with 223 Chinese higher education institutions and organisations. Most of the Chinese partners are from Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, although there are also considerable numbers of links with institutions in North-East, Central, and South and West China. Most links reported were established in the last 10 years.

In excess of a third of the specified education links are in the form of progression arrangements, with nearly 60 UK institutions having established such links. Most progression is undergraduate programmes. There are also a small number of franchising and validation arrangements. The most common types of links that had been established are (QAA, 2006):

- a) Arrangements for granting advanced standing for admission to a UK institution, or other preferential admission arrangements for students with specific Chinese qualifications.
- b) Foundation programme of study undertaken in China prior to admission to a UK higher education programme.

- c) Arrangements at undergraduate level for students following a first year, or more commonly first and second year, programme at a Chinese institution and then progressing to, normally, two years' study at a UK institution. In a few cases, students graduate with qualifications from both institutions (2+2 or 3+1).
- d) Arrangements at postgraduate level, whereby students normally follow a one-year programme in China followed by a one-year programme in the UK (1+1).
- e) Delivery of UK higher education programmes in China, either by UK staff or by Chinese staff with support from the UK institution. These include undergraduate level certificates and diplomas and, at graduate level, Masters and MBA programmes and examples of 'customised' programmes.
- f) UK higher education distance-learning programmes available in China, with support from local Chinese institutions.
- g) Joint-venture UK campuses in China.

A wide spread of programmes were offered by UK institutions delivering awards in China. The most common offering programmes are business and administrative studies, engineering, and mathematical and computer sciences, accounted for 37.6, 24.9 and 10% respectively. Other main programmes offered include veterinary sciences, agriculture and related subjects; linguistics, classics and related studies; mass communications and documentation; and social studies.

2.6 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter reviewed and discussed some of the key research findings which were presented by previous researchers on the perspectives of marketing strategies between English-speaking countries including Ireland and mainland China to establish a context within the current study and contribute to the current research literature.

To summarise, this chapter discussed the intentions for mainland Chinese students to study abroad in 2010; internationalisation of China's higher education and why mainland Chinese students study overseas; Irish education system and why to study in Ireland; and international education systems. The key findings by previous researchers on international education marketing were represented and discussed.

A good understanding of these perspectives, which is the main objective of the current project, will make a substantial contribution to the existing literature, to the policy-making by the Third-Level institutions in the west of Ireland, and will be helpful in guiding more mainland Chinese students seeking to study in Ireland. The next chapter will present the research methodology applied in this study.

Chapter Three:
Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methods applied to address the research questions. Quantitative Research method has been applied to attain the objectives of the research. In this chapter various research designs and philosophical assumptions are discussed followed by the case study approach. Furthermore, the techniques for the data gathering methods are discussed. Ethical considerations, limitations for the research and the research timelines are then explained.

3.2 The Objectives of the Research

1. Examine the size of the mainland Chinese students market.
2. How the mainland Chinese market is established and evaluates the marketing approach / methods currently employed by two Third-Level institutions.
3. Benchmarking Irish efforts / success versus major competitors such as the UK.

3.3 Research Site

The research in this study was performed in Galway, Ireland. In Galway, there are two Third-level institutions: Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) and National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway). A large number of mainland Chinese students are seeking their studying in those two institutions. Data from the target group helped to analyse the research objectives.

3.4 The Research Design

In this study, a questionnaire was designed for collecting data. The questionnaire survey was employed to collect quantitative data aiming to illustrate the status of mainland Chinese students' studying in the west of Ireland, as well as why they chose Ireland for overseas study. Survey questionnaires can collect data with breadth.

As the research was mainly based on the questionnaire, the designing of questionnaire is very important. The researcher had prepared the questionnaire to be an effective questionnaire. For the results of questionnaire to be fruitful, the researcher had framed the questions with deep concern to meet the research objectives. The researcher had tried to avoid mistakes in questionnaire to collect the information required for the research.

3.5 The Roles of the Researcher

The researcher was a student at GMIT where some of the respondents attended, and therefore there may have been a conflict of interest. To minimise this potential conflict, the researcher put the students at ease and to avoid having them feel uncomfortable being surveyed.

Although the researcher was closely related to the research context, the researcher was not familiar with the students. In fact, the position may be considered strength. The researcher came from mainland China, and went overseas to pursue graduate studies in Ireland. Therefore, the researcher has had similar experience to those mainland students in this study. This helped to build empathy with the students and helped to put them at ease.

The researcher had made the best use of the knowledge and experience without imposing own ideas on the students' voices. It was not easy, but the researcher felt that was successful and worthwhile.

3.6 Underlying Philosophical Assumptions

Harris (2008) has discussed the philosophical assumptions of positivistic, interpretative, and critical science research.

- Positivism is that the world is objective. Positivist researchers generally seek out facts in terms of relationships among variables and they focus on quantitative methods to test and verify hypotheses.
- Interpretivism is concerned with meaning, and it seeks to understand organizational members' meaning of a situation. An interpretive researcher assumes that knowledge and meaning are individual interpretations.
- Critical Science is a combination of critical theory and postmodernism.

3.7 Philosophical Assumptions Selection

Interpretive approach is based on the information requirements and behaviour of people. This research is mainly on the international marketing which deals with the behaviours of people and information. The researcher has chosen interpretive approach as it helps in collection of information and making decisions. Meanwhile, positivistic approach is employed in analysing the data collected by questionnaires.

3.8 Selection of a Research Method

Quantitative Research method has been chosen in this study. To fulfil the aim of the research, data collection and analyzing can be best done in the exploratory way. Quantitative research is a formal, objective, systematic process in which numerical data are utilized to obtain information about the world (Cormack (1991)).

3.9 Sample Size and Sample Selection

This study was conducted in GMIT and NUI Galway, where a large number of mainland Chinese students were studying. The targeted population included mainland Chinese students from both institutions. The researcher chose questionnaires survey to collect the primary data.

Eighty questionnaires were distributed. Sixty-two questionnaires were returned, a return-rate of 77.5%. Four questionnaires were discarded since more than a half of the questions were not completed. The total number of the qualified questionnaires was fifty-eight.

3.10 Selection of Research Tools

The researcher applied case study as the research tool. A case study is a useful method when the area of research is relatively less known, and the researcher is engaged in theory-building types of research. This is perhaps the most frequently used approach for thesis and dissertation research in business studies generally, and international business research made no difference (Piehhari & Welch, 2004).

3.10.1 Case Study of GMIT

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) was established in 1972, based at five locations in the west of Ireland. As the largest campus in Galway, it offers undergraduate, apprentice and post-graduate courses across a range of disciplines. In the Institute of Technology sector in Ireland, there is a unique blending of courses in science, business, engineering, technology and humanities and it is possible to progress through higher certificate, degree and masters level awards on to Ph.D. The core of learning lies in discovery and passion.

The award system of GMIT is aligned with the European Credit Transfer System and this enables students to transfer with ease to study abroad. International students coming to GMIT also avail of this credit transfer arrangement. GMIT has links with almost 100 centres of higher education throughout Europe, the United States and mainland China, and it welcomes applications from students across the world.

GMIT is also involved in a range of research activities involving high-level collaborations with other higher education centres, as well as industry. The Institute also provides a range of consultancy services, working in partnership with business and community organisations to provide higher education throughout the region and to promote the economic, social and cultural development of the west of Ireland.

The vision of GMIT is:

- Learning is and will be the core activity of the Institute, which brings students, staff and the region together to share, apply, test and create knowledge;
- GMIT will continue to develop as a regional organisation with an international focus committed to the personal and professional enrichment of its students, the needs of its region, national priorities and global opportunities;
- GMIT will both shape and respond to the perspectives and expectations of its stakeholders and will work in collaboration with them to meet their needs;
- GMIT will be an organisation characterised by its flexibility, creativity, responsiveness and a capacity to adapt.

(www.gmit.ie)

3.10.2 Case Study of NUI Galway

Founded in 1845 with an initial intake of 63 students in 1849, National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway) is now a thriving institution with over 16,000 students, of which 1,500 are international students representing over 92 countries across the globe, making up over 10% of the student population. NUI Galway is a leading international, research-intensive university, ranked among the top 250 universities in the world. In 2009 NUI Galway has been recognised as *University of the Year* by the Sunday Times, outperforming 21 other Irish third-level institutions to achieve this distinction.

Galway's large campus reflects the many disciplines from the majestic Arts Millennium Building to the Marine Science Institute, and the Cairnes Graduate School of Business to the Public Policy. With over 16,000 students and more than 2,200 staff, NUI Galway has a distinguished reputation for teaching and research excellence in the fields of arts, social science, and Celtic studies; business, public policy and law; engineering and informatics; medicine, nursing and health sciences; and science.

NUI Galway is a research-led university with internationally recognised expertise in selected priority areas. Research at NUI Galway is forward-thinking and global in scale. Today it is leading the field in a wide range of areas including stem cell and gene therapy research, human rights law, environmental change, and developing the next generation of internet technology.

Much of the research is translational. NUI Galway has developed excellent research and collaborations with national and multi-national industry partners. It is Ireland's leading university for knowledge transfer with more spin out companies, licenses and patents created in last three years, than any other Irish university.

(www.nuigalway.ie)

3.11 Data Gathering Phases

This research used a combination of secondary and primary data to make advantage of the two sources and to minimize the negative aspects of them at the same time. The secondary data had been used in this study including books, articles, journals, magazines, electronic sources like Emerald, EBSCO etc., and government and semi government publications.

The appropriateness and the amount of secondary data is still quite limited, which is used to support the primary data in interpretation of the results of primary data. Therefore, primary data is the major source of data based on which the following analysis and discussion is carried out. The primary data collection was from the questionnaires.

The primary data was mainly collected from a carefully designed questionnaire. The questionnaire developed involved several stages. Initially it involved the identification from the literature of the key elements of theory that were relevant to the research question. Comment and advice from the supervisor were sought on the representativeness and suitability of the questions and on the structure of the questionnaire to maintain content validity at this stage. The last stage involved sending out the questionnaire to both institutions.

Data was gathered between March and April 2010. For the quantitative data, the researcher contacted the International Officers in both institutions, explained the purpose of the research project, and collected the feedbacks of questionnaire survey from mainland Chinese students by email. At the same time, the researcher adopted accidental random sampling techniques to distribute the questionnaires and received the feedbacks from mainland Chinese students in both institutions.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Making sure the research was conducted with integrity and with respect for the participants was an important consideration. The researcher ensured that the research met ethical guidelines, all of the information provided by the participants was treated with strict confidentiality and their voluntary, informed consent was obtained. Firstly, all of the respondents were given a full briefing of the purpose of the research and surveyed on a one-to-one basis. Secondly, assurance was given to all the participants about their privacy with regard to participation and the confidentiality of the information they provided. Finally, the participants were informed of their right to stop the survey at any point or to refuse to answer any questions.

3.13 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data was analyzed by the SPSS 9.0 software program. Descriptive statistics was employed to illustrate the demographic characteristics of the sample.

3.14 Limitations of the Research

The major limitation was time. Due to time restriction the data collection was not sufficient to come at a conclusion. A lot of time was consumed to reply through emails which delayed the work.

Most of the conclusions were based on the secondary source of data as the primary source of data as many confidentially reasons and could not get all the details to arrive at a conclusion. The feedback indicated that the questionnaires were somewhat long. It was observable in the returned questionnaires that some questions were not answered. Meanwhile, most of the reports were unable to access as the matter of confidentiality.

3.15 The Research Timelines

January 2010 - - Feb 2010: Literature review

- Develop proposal, methodology and complete the literature review
- Obtain relevant published statistics
- Official contact with the Irish Third-Level institutions
- Design the questionnaires
- Collection of official and unofficial statistic

March 2010 - - April 2010: Data collection

- Statistical analysis of mainland Chinese students market
- Collection of the questionnaires for mainland Chinese students in Galway

May 2010 - - June 2010: Data analysis

- Analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires
- Analysis of the statistics and data obtained

July 2010 - - August 2010: Mainly work on the thesis

Chapter Four:

Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the research question: how the two Third-Level institutions (GMIT and NUI Galway) do to recruit more mainland Chinese students and what factors attract mainland Chinese students coming to Ireland. The primary source of data collected from these two institutions has been explained in this chapter. Finally the analysis made on the findings has been written to understand the link between the research and the questionnaire.

4.2 Application of Methodology

Case study of two institutions in the west of Ireland has been applied as a research tool. Case study is most suitable when the field of research is less well known. This research tool has helped to gain knowledge about the information of mainland Chinese students studying in these two institutions, which can help the institutions to consummate their marketing strategies. GMIT and NUI Galway are the two institutions located in the west of Ireland, enrolling a large number of mainland Chinese students every year. Data for the research has been collected from the questionnaire of two institutions.

The combination of both primary and secondary data was useful in analysis of data. Two case studies of the institutions were used as the primary source of data, and the books, journals, reports, and websites were used as secondary source of data.

4.3 Findings

4.3.1 Case Study of Two Institutions in Galway

More and more mainland Chinese students are choosing to study abroad with their undergraduate and graduate degrees. The Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 below showed the numbers of mainland Chinese students enrolling in GMIT and NUI Galway since 2005. The numbers of students for both institutions were increasing year by year. There were 46 mainland Chinese students studying in GMIT in 2009, and 48 in NUI Galway.

According to the information provided by the International Officers in both institutions, students could choose a large number of programmes for studying. Most students in GMIT were seeking for undergraduate degrees, while students in NUI Galway were almost studying the graduate degrees or Ph.D. Meanwhile, GMIT recruited mainland Chinese students mainly through the university cooperation with two institutions in China: Nanchang University and Wuxi South Ocean College.

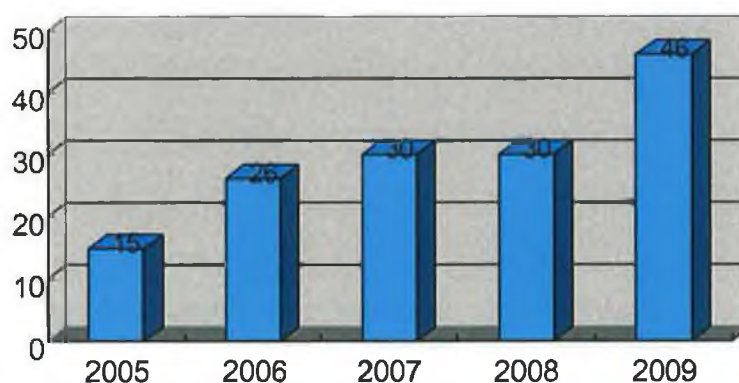


Figure 4.1: The numbers of mainland Chinese students enrolling in GMIT since 2005

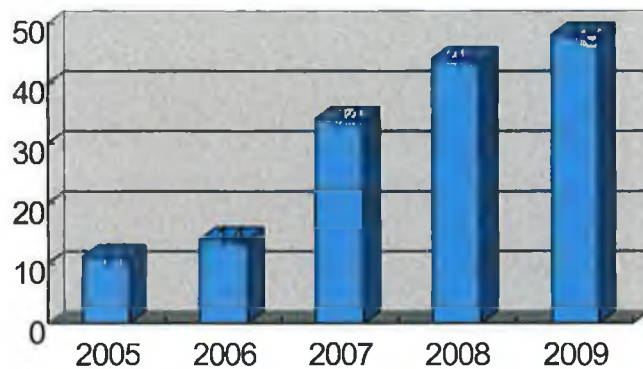


Figure 4.2: The numbers of mainland Chinese students enrolling in NUI Galway since 2005

4.3.2 Impressive Growth of UK International Higher Education

From the literature review, we found that the global demand for higher education had experienced impressive growth recently. A 2004 Department for Education and Skills long term strategy paper: *“Putting the World into World-class Education”* forecasted that total global demand for international tertiary student places would increase from 2.1 million in 2003 to 5.8 million by 2020.

Marketing higher education internationally is of strategic and economic significance to the UK economy, as well as to the institutions and regions which receive commercial and cultural benefits. The UK has an excellent reputation for academic learning. The UK is fortunate to be home to a multiplicity of universities, each with diverse strengths and missions. (www.timeshighereducation.co.uk)

Most UK universities operate internationally, and maintain long-term links with overseas institutions. These links are maintained not only by recruiting international students, but also by developing international academic and research through collaborative partnerships and establishing off-shore campuses. (British Council)

4.4 Questionnaire Analysis

The questionnaire prepared for the research is simple and easy to understand. It was prepared in order to answer the research objectives. The questionnaires were collected from GMIT and NUI Galway and the International officers in both institutions helped a lot in this research.

The findings from the two institutions were analysed in the form of questions asked.

Question 1: Please state your gender.

As the Figure 4.3 showed below, the percentage of male is larger than the percentage of female in both institutions. In NUI Galway, the percentage of male accounted for 61.1% and 38.9% of female, which was 22.2% in difference between them. In GMIT, the difference was smaller. Male was 55% and female was 45%, respectively. The data indicated that more males in mainland China were seeking for the Third-level studying in the west of Ireland than females.

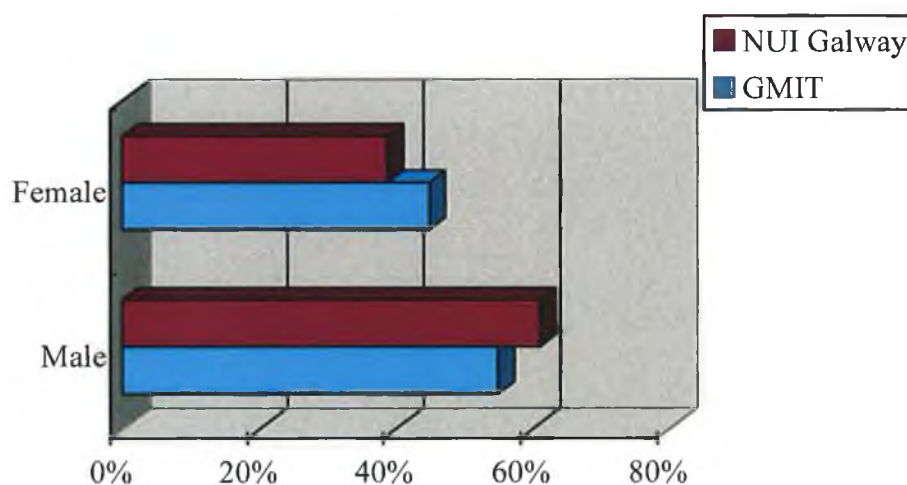


Figure 4.3: The gender of mainland Chinese students between two institutions

Question 2: What is your age?

According to the questionnaire, the studying students' age group was significantly different between the two institutions. Most mainland Chinese students in GMIT were at the age group of 20-21, while nearly half of the students in NUI Galway were in the age group of 25-28 (See Figure 4.4). This indicated that students in GMIT were clearly younger than students in NUI Galway. Meanwhile, there were very few students below 19 or over the age of 29 in both institutions.

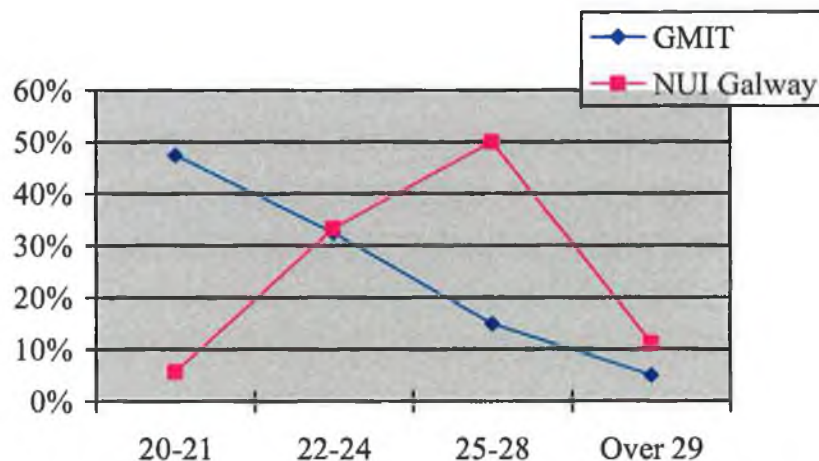


Figure 4.4: The age group of mainland Chinese students between two institutions

Question 3: Which city (in China) are you from?

Studying overseas needs strong financial support from the family, and most of the mainland Chinese students are self-financed. The data showed that students studying in the west of Ireland almost came from those Chinese “big” cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and so on. The results of the survey presented the situations as well. Our data survey indicated that a big number of GMIT students came from Nanchang and the cities near by, which are located in the central part of mainland China, where the economy of students' families is not so good compared with those big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai. The reason may be because GMIT has the cooperation with Nanchang University.

Question 4: The programme you studying.

A large quantity of programmes is available for students when they are enrolling the institutions. The most popular programmes for mainland Chinese students are Business, Engineering, IT, Medical and etc. Hotel Management becomes a hot programme for students recently because of the booming of the Chinese economics. From the survey we could find out that there were a group of students in GMIT studied Hotel Management, who were the exchange students from Wuxi South Ocean College. This further supports that the cooperation between GMIT and Chinese universities has important effect on the students' studying in GMIT.

Question 5: What is your current academic level?

The results of the questionnaire clearly showed that mainland Chinese students in NUI Galway were at the higher academic level than those in GMIT. In the survey, 67.5% of the students in GMIT were in the fourth year of studying, but 61.1% of the surveyed students in NUI Galway were in the positions of Ph.D. studying. There was no Ph.D. student or Postdoctoral researcher in GMIT from the survey. (See Figure 4.5) This indicated that more mainland Chinese students possibly chose NUI Galway for the academic research.

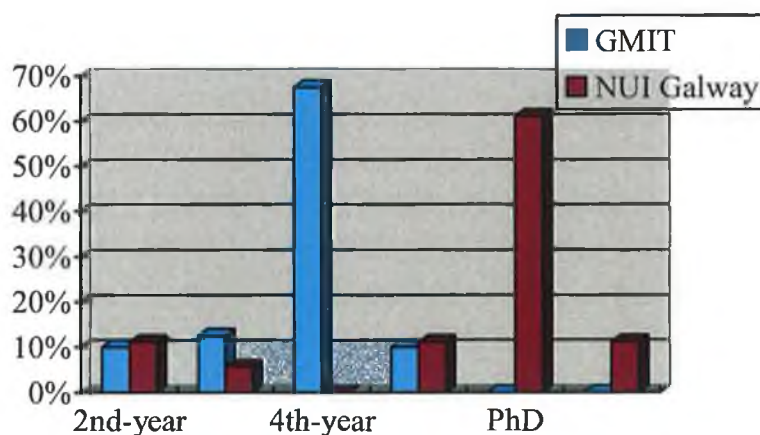


Figure 4.5: The academic level of mainland Chinese students between two institutions

Question 6: How much do you pay for the tuition fees per year?

Students from Non-EU countries including China need to pay the higher tuition fees to enrol the courses compared with EU students. In GMIT, 65% of mainland Chinese students paid €6,000 - €8,000 for their studying per year. In NUI Galway, 44.4% of the students paid €4,000 - €6,000 per year and 38.9% of students did not need to pay the fees for enrolling courses. (See Figure 4.6) Those students who did not need to pay the fees were studying for a higher academic level such as Ph.D., or received the Scholarships from NUI Galway.

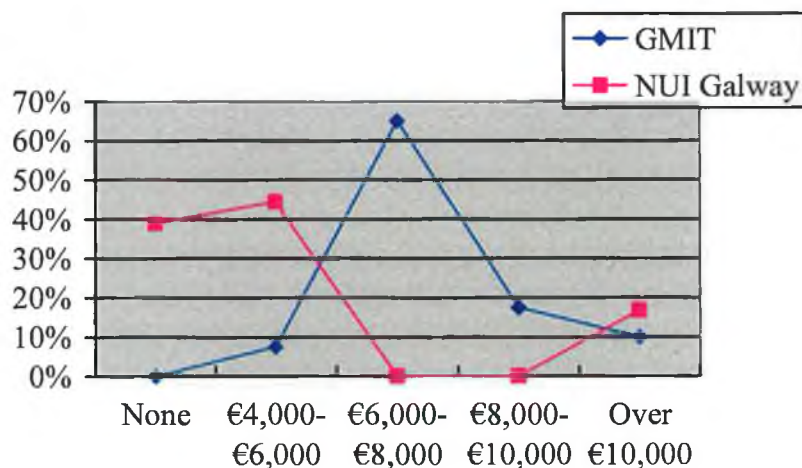


Figure 4.6: Tuition fees for mainland Chinese students between two institutions

Question 7: Please state your English level when you first arrived in Ireland.

Nowadays, more and more institutions are beginning to require a higher English level when they recruit foreign students. In the survey, most mainland Chinese students in both institutions attended the international English level exams, and most of them took IELTS (International English Language Testing System) (See Figure 4.7). For the students who achieved for the Ph.D. enrolling, there was no requirement for the English levels; but for those who studied the undergraduate or graduate courses, the English levels were necessary.

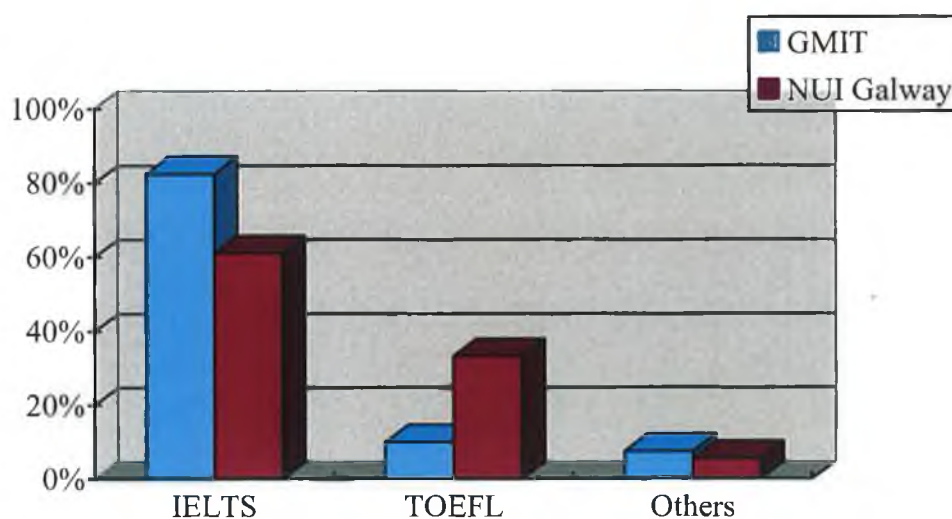


Figure 4.7: English level of mainland Chinese students between two institutions

Question 8: When did you come to Ireland?

From the Figure 4.8, we could find out that more than half of the mainland Chinese students in both institutions came to Ireland in 2009, in which 70% of students were in GMIT and 50% were in NUI Galway. Our data also showed that the longer the students stayed in Ireland, the percentage of the students in institutions was smaller.

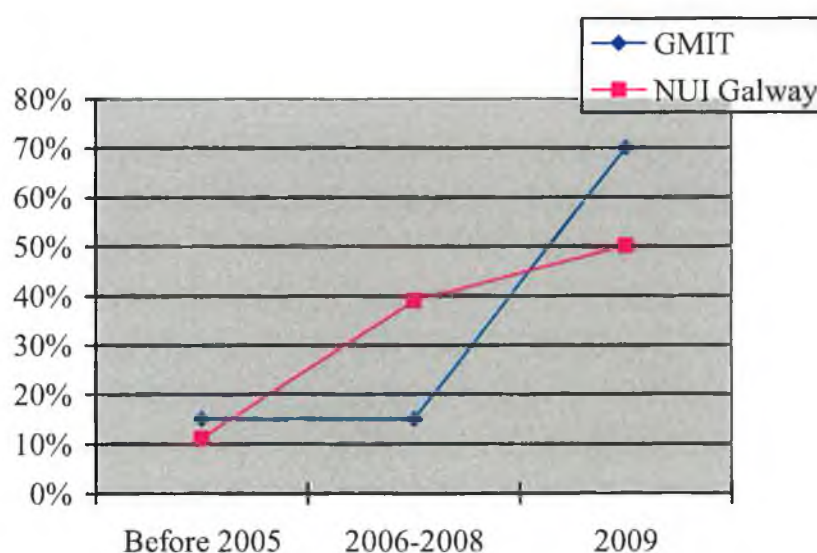


Figure 4.8: Time to Ireland for mainland Chinese students between two institutions

Question 9: Would you recommend a friend to study in Ireland?

Students from both institutions were more likely to recommend a friend to study in Ireland. In the survey, 62.5% of students in GMIT and 55.6% in NUI Galway would recommend Ireland for overseas studying to friends with the reasons of good education, beautiful countryside, and friendly people in Ireland.

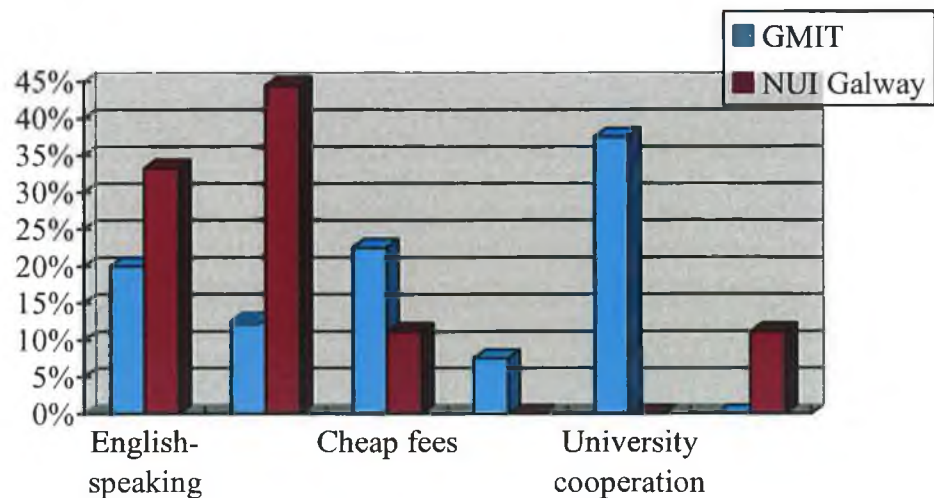
Question 10: Which of the following best describes your reasons for choosing Ireland as a place to study?

Figure 4.9: Reasons for mainland Chinese students choosing Ireland between two institutions

The factors for mainland Chinese students studying in Ireland are varying in many different aspects: English-speaking country, institution with good reputations, cheap tuition fees, part-time working, university cooperation, and others. From the results of the questionnaire, students in these two institutions had different reasons for choosing Ireland. In GMIT, 37.5% of students considered university cooperation, followed by 22.5% of students considering cheap tuition fees and 20% of students considering English-speaking country. In NUI Galway, students who considered institution with good reputations were 44.4% and English-speaking country were 33.3%, respectively (See Figure 4.9).

Question 11: If you are an exchange student, please state your college and programme in China.

GMIT has been very successful in university cooperation with mainland China. GMIT had already specified education links with two institutions in China and numbers of exchange students from those two Chinese institutions come to Ireland every year. One Chinese institution is Nanchang University and the other is Wuxi South Ocean College. Students could select a large amount of courses in GMIT and graduate with qualifications from both institutions (2+2 or 3+1), which was a positive factor for Chinese students came to GMIT. In this survey, 65% of the responses in GMIT were from Nanchang University and 17.5% from Wuxi South Ocean College. Meanwhile, no university cooperation was shown in the survey for NUI Galway.

Question 12: What is your overall satisfaction rating with Irish education?

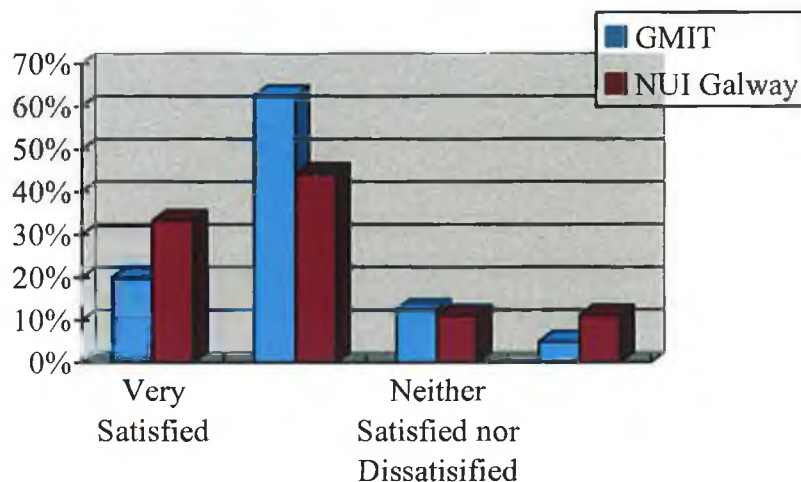


Figure 4.10: Satisfaction rating with Irish education between two institutions

According to the results of the questionnaire, nearly 80% of the mainland Chinese students surveyed were satisfied with the education. This showed that Irish education could meet most of the students' demands for their studying. The details of the overall satisfaction rating are shown in the above Figure 4.10.

Question 13: How much do you spend per month?

The living cost is another important factor which effects the decision for mainland Chinese students to choose to study abroad. From the survey, around 90% of students spent €400 - €800 per month. 75% of students in GMIT spent €400 - €600 per month, while only 22.5% of students spent €600 - €800 per month. In contrast, In NUI Galway, 27.8% of the students spent €400 - €600 and 61.1% of studnets spent €600 - €800 per month. (See Figure 4.11) Our data suggested that students in NUI Galway spent much more money than the students in GMIT. This result further supported our data that more Chinese students in NUI Galway had scholarship and did not need to pay the fees for enrolling.

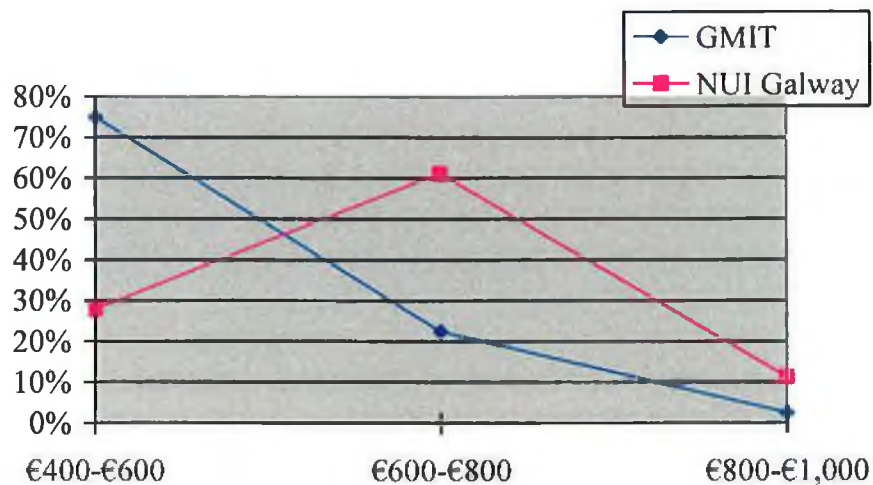


Figure 4.11: Living cost per month for mainland Chinese students between two institutions

Question 14: Do you have a part-time job while studying here in Ireland?

One factor attracting mainland Chinese students choose Ireland because the Irish government allows students to work as part-time while studying in school and to work as full-time during holidays. Students can support their studies with high wage income and contact with the society. Students could choose to work in quite a lot of places, such as restaurants, delis, hotels, and etc. 30% students in GMIT had a part-time job, and just 11.1% students in NUI Galway worked as part-time. Most students surveyed in NUI Galway were full-time Ph.D. students, who got the scholarship from the institution and were well paid.

Question 15: Who supports your study in Ireland?

According to the results of the survey, 87.5% of students in GMIT were supported by their families and 12.5% of students worked as part-time to support their study. Meanwhile, 83.3% of students surveyed in NUI Galway got scholarship and just 16.7% of them were supported by their families (See Figure 4.12). Our data showed that the higher academic levels the students achieved the fewer burdens for the students' families.

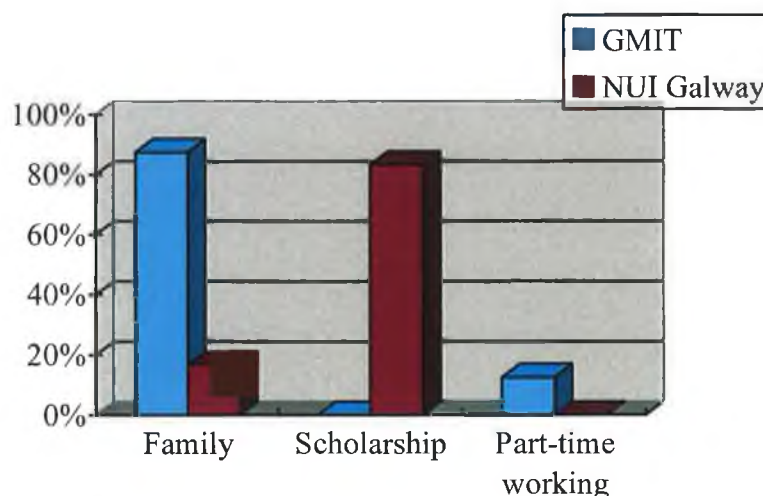


Figure 4.12: Study supporting for mainland Chinese students between two institutions

From the researcher's point of view the questionnaire developed gathers almost all the required data which is related to the international marketing of Third-level institutions in the west of Ireland. The replies from the students were easy to understand and analyse. The answers for the questionnaire could give an understanding of the marketing from the organizations point of view. From the replies, it was found that these two institutions had the different methods to recruit mainland Chinese students, both of them could learn from each other to expand the overseas market.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the findings are gathered from the primary and secondary source of data. The answers gathered from the students in two institutions are discussed and analysis is done based on the answers from the questionnaire. The findings and analysis give a clear picture of the whole research, which further leads to the Discussion and Conclusions.

Chapter Five:

Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the views and analysis obtained from chapter four. All the theoretical knowledge attained from the literature review and methodology combined with the various findings draws the research to reach at a conclusion. The conclusions which are being discussed in this chapter are based on the results of both the primary and secondary data collections.

5.2 Conclusions about the Research Objectives

The following are the research objectives that were proposed by the researcher for research:

- Examine the size of the mainland Chinese students market.
- How the mainland Chinese market is established and evaluates the marketing approach / methods currently employed by two Third-Level institutions.
- Benchmarking Irish efforts / success versus major competitors such as the UK.

The findings for the research objectives are presented below.

1. Examine the size of the mainland Chinese students market.

From the China's first 2010 survey report on *mainland Chinese students' intentions to study abroad* of chapter two, it may be concluded that there is huge demand for mainland Chinese students to study overseas. Irish Third-Level institutions can meet those demands and recruit more mainland Chinese students.

2. How the mainland Chinese market is established and evaluates the marketing approach / methods currently employed by two Third-Level institutions.

This object is to analyse the marketing methods employed by two Irish Third-Level institutions. The results of the questionnaire indicated that university cooperation and college reputations played important roles when recruiting mainland Chinese students. The institutions follow international marketing strategy along with marketing mix 7P's could easily compete and sustain the mainland Chinese market.

3. Benchmarking Irish efforts / success versus major competitors such as the UK.

The final object is to examine the successful factors for UK institutions recruiting overseas students. A number of UK institutions have established strategic cooperation with mainland China, and build several education links with each other. Strategic cooperation is a good method for international education market. Irish Third-level institutions may need to further build up more cooperation links with Chinese high education structures such as universities, even though GMIT has been somehow successful in this aspect.

5.3 Conclusions about the Research Question

The research question is how two Third-Level institutions in the west of Ireland improve their marketing strategies in mainland China.

Marketing is all about achieving the organization goals and benefiting the organization through customer satisfaction. In this research, customer is mainland Chinese students and the organization is institution. The main objective of the institutions in Ireland is to recruit maximum number of the students from mainland China who intend to study overseas.

Based on our research results, Third-Level institutions will be proposed to apply different major strategies such as strategy cooperation, recruitment agents, advertising and promotion, and Internet using to recruit students from mainland China, where there is a huge market, by which Irish Third-Level institutions can improve their marketing overseas. But most importantly, the reputation of the institutions and cooperation links with Chinese universities are the key factors which affect the Chinese students to make the decision to study in Ireland. In addition, the tuition fees, Irish culture, Irish government's policy for students' legally working as part-time and Irish friendly people are also important factors.

5.4 Limitations of the Research

There are certain limitations in this research which can be further analysed to provide better results in the future:

- The analysis and findings are limited because of the time limitation, permission problems and the too big research topic compared with the research time.
- The questionnaire approach has been chosen for the research, which has made some limitation for the answers of the questions asked.
- The institutions have maintained their marketing plans confidential, which restricted the research to have a broader view on their marketing strategies.
- Sample of the questionnaire-investigated population is small.

5.5 Opportunities for Further Research

The international education is increasing globally, and education institutions should be developing and implementing new strategies and planning. As the research is only confined to two institutions in the west of Ireland, there should be coping for further research into more institutions in Ireland and their marketing strategies can be analysed. In addition to that, the research can be broadened in the results after students have finished their study, such as the experiences that mainland Chinese students may have had while living and studying in Ireland and the future plans for the mainland Chinese students may have after graduation in Ireland.

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Appendix

Appendix One: Questionnaire for mainland Chinese students in Ireland:

Thank you for taking the time to complete the following survey. Your feedback is highly appreciated. Please take a moment to complete this short survey to tell us about your experience. Your responses will be kept confidential.

1. Please state your gender:

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

2. What is your age?

- ☐ 20-21
☐ 22-24
☐ 25-28
☐ Over 29

3. Which city (in China) are you from: _____

4. Which institution are you studying at in Ireland?

The programme you studying:

5. What is your current academic level?

- ☐ First-year student
☐ Second-year student
☐ Third-year student
☐ Fourth-year student
☐ Master Student
☐ PhD
☐ Postdoctoral researcher

6. How much do you pay for the tuition fees per year?

7. Please state your English level when you first arrived in Ireland:

- a. IELTS: _____
b. TOEFL: _____
c. Others: _____

8. When did you come to Ireland? _____

9. Would you recommend a friend to study in Ireland?

- ☐ Yes, because _____
☐ No, because _____

10. Which of the following best describes your reasons for choosing Ireland as a place to study?

- ☐ English-speaking country
- ☐ Institution with good reputations
- ☐ Cheap tuition fees
- ☐ Part-time working
- ☐ University cooperation
- ☐ Others: _____

11. If you are an exchange student, please state your institution in China:

The programme you studying at in China:

How does this university cooperation work?

12. What is your overall satisfaction rating with Irish education?

- ☐ Very Satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat Satisfied
- ☐ Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very Dissatisfied

Please tell us why you feel that way.

13. How much do you spend per month?

- ☐ €400-€600
- ☐ €600-€800
- ☐ €800-€1000
- ☐ €1000 above

14. Do you have part-time job while studying here in Ireland?

- ☐ Yes. Please state what kind of job and how many hours per week you work.

☐ No.

15. Who supports your study in Ireland?

- ☐ Family
- ☐ Scholarship
- ☐ Part-time working
- ☐ Others: _____

Thank you very much for your time and we wish you every success in Ireland.